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## WHAT NATIONAL POLICY SHALL WE ADOPT WITH REFERENCE TO MEXICO?

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The questions involved in our relations with Mexico, while both serious and complex, lend themselves to satisfactory solution, provided we are willing to adopt a policy which will be sincerely and genuinely helpful to Mexico; a policy so formulated that it will contribute toward enabling her to solve her problems in her own way; in accordance with the genius, the political preparation and the social status of her people. Such a policy demands that we discard those mediaeval standards of vengeance which would lead us to visit upon an entire people, the misdeeds and crimes of a handful of bandits.

We must, furthermore, learn to deal with the Mexican situation on a basis of fact rather than through the intermediary of political phrases. It is astonishing to what an extent we are the slaves and even dupes of mere catchwords. We use the terms "democracy," "inalienable rights," "will of the people," as if they had no relation whatsoever to the social and political development of a people. We assume that the particular form of government and the particular type of institution that we have developed in the United States are not only the goal to which all nations should aspire, but are something which should be introduced immediately as a guarantee to their happiness, progress and prosperity.

It is this failure to face the facts of the Mexican situation that has prevented us from making our full contribution toward the reestablishment of order in that unhappy country. In fact, for a time it looked as if our policy, far from contributing to the reestablishment of order, would become a disturbing factor in the internal situation, perpetuating and even aggravating the conditions of anarchy that prevailed.

In any attempt to formulate a policy which will at once subserve our best interests as well as those of Mexico there are two or three cardinal facts which must ever be kept in mind.

In the first place, we must recognize that Mexico is living under a written constitution which is out of harmony with the basic needs of her people. In a moment of idealistic emulation of the United States, a small group of her leaders adopted a constitution based on the federal system of the United States. What Mexico needed and still needs is a unified national system sufficiently strong to make its power felt in every section of the republic, and thus capable of assuring respect for law and order. A strong and centralized national government does not necessarily mean a tyrannical government. No one would call the French system tyrannical, and yet it is highly centralized. In a sense it is true, therefore, that no president can ever hope successfully to govern Mexico in strict conformity with her present constitution. The twenty-six years of the administration of General Diaz, as compared with the long period of anarchy, from 1810 to 1879, furnish adequate and convincing proof of this fact. Until the provisions of the Mexican constitution are brought into harmony with the political needs of the nation there will be a wide gap between the real political system and that embodied in the written constitution.

The Mexican people are neither turbulent nor difficult to govern. From the time of the first movement for independence in 1810 until the present day, Mexico's difficulties are traceable to the ruthless conflicts of political factions. For over one hundred years, political agitation in Mexico has taken the form of armed conflict rather than of free discussion. In most cases these conflicts were due to the ambitions of local political leaders who made the ignorant and trusting Indians their dupes rather than their beneficiaries.

The Madero revolution of 1910, like the Juarez revolution of the early '60's, was an exception to this rule and assumed real national proportions; based on a real political, economic and social purpose. In spite of the remarkable progress of the country during the administration of President Diaz there is one fact which stands out with great clearness and which explains the opposition which gradually undermined his power and finally led to his overthrow. General Diaz fell into the error of confusing national wealth with national welfare. He assumed that the exploitation of the natural resources of the country, with its accompanying investment of foreign capital,

would inevitably lead to the betterment of the condition of the laboring classes. This was a perfectly natural error inasmuch as it represented the prevailing economic doctrine of the period. He failed to appreciate the fact that in countries in which the laboring population is ignorant and lacks all spirit of coöperation and combination, the exploitation of the laboring classes is an inevitable accompaniment to the exploitation of natural resources. National wealth may advance by leaps and bounds, but the position of subjection of the working classes prevents them from securing a fair share of the national surplus. This is precisely what occurred in Mexico. The fact that some real progress was made only served to awaken a spirit of discontent. The situation in Mexico is such that any national administration, in order to be really successful, must extend its protecting care to the masses of the working people. This means social legislation of a highly developed character, guaranteeing a minimum wage and adequate protection against exploitation through company stores, payment in kind, advances in anticipation of wages, etc.

Furthermore, if we really desire to avoid armed intervention, we must do everything in our power to assure the establishment of a strong, responsible government in Mexico. This means something far more than the formal recognition of this or that *de facto* government. It is a well known fact that the Texan and New Mexican borders are the favorite hatching places for conspiracies against established order in Mexico, and that most of the subversive movements have received either financial or other material support from American sources. If we are to assist Mexico in the solution of her problems, we must so guard our frontier that revolutionary movements hatched on American soil will not be permitted to develop, and that the American border will be closed in fact, as well as in law, to the furnishing of arms and ammunition to revolutionary leaders.

If we adopt as the cardinal principle of our policy the establishment of a strong and stable government in Mexico we must be prepared to assist her in the solution of the difficult problems involved in her financial reorganization. This does not involve the necessity of pledging the credit of the United States government, but it does mean that American financiers must be encouraged to assist Mexico in the rehabilitation of her national finances. This

financial coöperation is more important at the present moment than at any previous period in Mexican history owing to the government's dire necessity, on the one hand, and to the closing of European sources of credit on the other.

Finally, I desire to refer to the delicate question raised by the long series of border difficulties, and to the policy which we should pursue with reference thereto. If our instinctive reactions are to be mediaeval, if our attitude is merely to wreak vengeance on those who commit depredations without reference to the effect of such a policy on our relations with the Mexican people, we are on the high road not only to armed intervention but to war with Mexico.

I desire to make a plea for a different viewpoint, a different attitude, a different guiding principle in the formulation of our policy. Unless I am much mistaken, the President of the United States would never have sent a punitive expedition into Mexico if he had not feared that the Congress of the United States would force him to measures more radical and more drastic. If he had been in a position to depend on the self-control, the patience and forbearance of Congress, I believe he would have said to the American people:

The sending of a punitive force into Mexico will endanger the cardinal principle of our Mexican policy, namely the reestablishment of order within the republic. Such an expedition cannot help but undermine the de facto government by arousing a suspicion in the minds of the Mexican people that their government is a party to foreign invasion. It will make the reestablishment of order in Mexico more difficult because it will encourage revolutionary leaders to call upon the Mexican people to oust the invading foreigner. By sending our troops into Mexico we become the mere plaything of events; any untoward incident may precipitate a prolonged and bloody struggle with the Mexican nation.

The fact that we are encountering great difficulty in finding the leader of the brigands is an indication of the forbearance which we should show in giving to the Mexican government ample time to bring the outlaws to justice. It is unworthy of a great nation such as ours to engage in a mere man hunt on foreign soil. The de facto government of General Carranza is now in control, and we can well afford to leave with it the task of hunting out the wrong-

doers. He is in a far better position to do this than we. Let us by all means hold the Carranza government responsible for the punishment of the wrongdoers, but let us not embark upon a policy, the immediate consequence of which may be, that in endeavoring to wreak vengeance on a few outlaws we find ourselves forced to wage war on sixteen millions of innocent people.

Today when the real purpose of the punitive expedition has been accomplished, when the band of outlaws has been dispersed and so many of its members killed, the large and courageous thing to do would be to say to the country:

Our mission in Mexico, if a mission it was, is fulfilled. We withdraw our troops, satisfied that the Carranza government will make the best endeavor to fulfill its promises. We do not wish to endanger our amicable relations with the Mexican people by continuing the delicate and anomalous situation created by the presence of United States soldiers on Mexican soil.

While such a policy would arouse immediate criticism from the unthinking, especially in this year of presidential manouvering, I firmly believe that it would soon receive the approval of the sound and sober judgment of the American people.

There is no reason why we should not enter into a joint agreement with Mexico in order to establish an effective control of the border. A joint agreement would mean the coöperation of the Mexican army and the army of the United States, and would make impossible, or at least exceedingly unlikely, a recurrence of the unfortunate events which during the last few months have brought the two nations to the verge of war. Such coöperation would be deeply appreciated in Mexico and while its operation would, no doubt, meet with some difficulties during the early stages, it would ultimately become not only a safeguard to our border but an assurance to the Mexican people of the spirit of international helpfulness that is dictating American policy.

We can do much to assist Mexico in the solution of her grave domestic problems, but we must not delude ourselves with the thought that we are better able to solve them than Mexico herself, or that we can greatly accelerate their lasting solution through a policy of dictation or armed intervention. Mexico must make enormous sacrifices in order to educate her people and to increase

their industrial efficiency; she must make a stupendous effort to develop a small land-holding class, and she must provide a highly organized system of protective legislation for her laboring classes. No one who really knows the Mexican people and who has studied their characteristics with sympathetic interest, can help but feel that all of these problems are capable of solution, but that for their solution much time and endless patience will be required. There will be much groping, much stumbling, many false starts and endless discouragements, but it will be through the overcoming of these obstacles that the Mexican nation will develop the qualities necessary for self-government, and the Mexican administration will acquire the experience necessary to grapple with large national problems.

For the United States the choice lies between a policy of helpful coöperation and one of armed intervention. If a policy of helpful coöperation be adopted our government will prevent American soil from becoming the hatching ground of conspiracies against order in Mexico; our financiers will assist the Mexican government in the rehabilitation of her finances, and our capitalists, in the conduct of great Mexican enterprises, will have due regard for the welfare and for the economic and social advance of the Mexican people. With such coöperation the problems of reëstablishing order in Mexico, of maintaining a stable government and of governing a docile and peaceable people become comparatively simple. Through popular education and the adoption of measures designed to increase the industrial efficiency of the laboring classes, the foundations will be laid for the intelligent participation of the masses of the Mexican people in the political life of the country, thus enabling her to look forward to the development of something approaching democratic government.

The alternative to the policy of helpful coöperation is armed intervention. Through such intervention we assume the responsibility for a series of problems for which we are temperamentally unfitted. We introduce into our domestic political situation a disturbing factor and we destroy at one blow the hope of a real Pan-American, continental policy. Armed intervention in Mexico, besides being a grave injustice to the mass of the Mexican people, will alienate for generations to come the sympathies of

the peoples of Central and South America. We will be regarded as aggressors, coveting the property of our neighbors.

From whatever point of view, therefore, we approach the question, whether from the standpoint of our own domestic policy, the welfare of Mexico, or our position on the American continent, our relations with Mexico should be determined by a spirit of international coöperation, which will assure Mexico of our integrity of purpose and give to the other republics of the American continent, as well as to the world at large, assurance that the United States stands for a new concept of international relations, one in which mutual suspicion shall give way to confidence, aggression to coöperation, and trickery to helpfulness.